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SIPDIS
DEPT FOR EBB/TPP/IPE JURBAN AND LHUGHES
PLEASE PASS TO USTR AMALITO AND DOLIVER
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA FOR PAO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO FOR PAO AEMERSON
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [KIPR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CS](#)

SUBJECT: COSTA RICAN IPR EVENT LINKS PIRATED GOODS TO ORGANIZED CRIME

REF: SAN JOSE 168; 2006 PANAMA 2015

11. SUMMARY: On December 2, Embassy San Jose sponsored an intellectual property rights (IPR) event featuring the screening of National Geographic's *Illicit*, a film about the nefarious links between pirated consumer goods and transnational crime networks. We highly recommend screening the film *Illicit* by other Posts to raise public awareness as a means to combat IPR enforcement challenges. Moving forward, we will explore the possibility of airing the film on Costa Rican national television. We also will develop a webpage devoted to IPR, provide *Illicit* DVDs to educational institutions for lending purposes, hold a follow-on speaker program in 2010, and consider linking Costa Rican officials with Panamanian counterparts to discuss the theme of falsified medicines. End summary.

WHY SUCH AN EVENT?

12. As outlined in Post's IPR strategy (reftel A), advancing the enforcement of IPR crimes in Costa Rica is difficult and fraught with legal and institutional hurdles. We concluded that we needed a twofold public message: (1) IPR promotes both commercial and cultural innovation -- an advantage to the Costa Rican economy and (2) the purchase of a pirated good is not an innocent purchase but an "economic vote" supporting not only illicit merchandise but also transnational crime networks. Furthermore, while the Costa Rican Attorney General asserts that his office does not have the resources to pursue IPR crime, he also states that his office will prosecute organized crime. Therefore, we want to demonstrate the connection between IPR and organized crime so as to (1) raise public awareness of the nefarious and underworld nature of pirated goods and (2) show the Costa Rican prosecutors and judiciary that IPR issues and organized crime are inextricably linked and cannot be compartmentalized, resources notwithstanding.

WHY THE MOVIE ILLICIT?

¶3. National Geographic's film Illicit is based on a book of the same title by Moises Naim of Foreign Policy magazine. The film uses the broad assortment of pirated goods from the obvious such as DVDs and fashion goods to the not so obvious such as car parts (as a consequence of reverse engineering) and falsified medicines to demonstrate the overwhelming scope of the problem. We liked the idea of showcasing a film produced by an organization with a sterling reputation based on a book by a well-respected scholar with Latin American roots. In addition, the film does not focus on pirated goods as an issue of complaint by multi-national corporations; rather, the focus is on multi-national criminal networks.

¶4. We considered screening the film in English early in 2009, but concluded that the potential audience would be too small. For the December 2 screening, we presented a dubbed Spanish-language translation of excellent quality. Thus, Illicit's availability in Spanish became a key driver for the event. The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in Mexico produced the Spanish version of Illicit only months ago and the distributor, On Screen Films, graciously made it available to us.

WHO SUPPORTED SUCH AN EVENT?

¶5. Given the Econ section's lack of budget for such an event, we solicited support from six sponsors. The lead sponsor was the Costa Rican-American Cultural Center. The Center's Director Karl Schmack welcomed the opportunity to open his 300 seat auditorium for the screening of the film. We then requested donations from five organizations:

-- Costa Rican-American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham),
-- Chamber of Costa Rican Exporters (CADEXCO),
-- Costa Rican Chamber of Information Technology and Communication (CAMTIC),
-- Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector (UCCAEP), and
-- Central American Federation of Pharmaceutical Laboratories (FEDEFARMA).

The donations covered auditorium operating costs and refreshments for the reception following the movie screening. Please see the attachment for a digital version of the event program.

¶6. Preceding the film screening, well-known Costa Rican biologist Pedro Leon delivered a speech that counter-balanced the dark theme of Illicit with the positive theme of intellectual property development and registration. Leon, currently Director of the GOCR's Peace With Nature initiative, noted his prior experience as an academic biologist in producing and registering intellectual property. He explained that university researchers sign over their intellectual property rights to the university -- without question -- and emphasized in his talk that it is irresponsible on the part of the researcher and the university not to register intellectual property. The "loss of rights" sacrifices the potential yield of income in the future.

WHO CAME?

¶17. Attendees included representatives of the sponsoring chambers, members of the diplomatic corps, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, law firms, university officials, students, and prosecutors and judges. The Italian Ambassador noted his approval of the film even though one "chapter" focuses on organized crime problems in Naples. The German DCM praised the direct and hard-hitting impact of the film. The British DCM was impressed by the film's depiction of the overwhelming scope of the issue. The film's impact was palpable throughout the hour-long feature event. At the conclusion, the estimated 150 participants sat in stunned silence and quietly exited the theater as if departing from a court sentencing.

HOW CAN WE BUILD ON THE IMPACT OF THIS EVENT?

¶18. Looking forward, we plan on continuing Illicit's impact by providing DVDs to Centro Cultural, AmCham, and Costa Rican's Judicial School. In April or May, we will produce a program on pirated goods through the speaker program sponsored by Post's Public Affairs office. We will also explore the possibility of airing the film on Costa Rican national television (contingent on approval by National Geographic). Other ideas include linking key officials of the Panamanian national health system (who are prominently spotlighted in the film due to the 2006 public health disaster caused by falsified medicines, reftel B) with the Costa Rican Ministry of Health. Centro Cultural was electrified by the prospects of expanding its ties to the Embassy by using its theater for more Embassy sponsored educational programs and even linking documentary presentations like Illicit as part of its English language training programs on site.

¶19. We received requests for more information on how to acquire the film. Interest ranged from public awareness to incorporation into Hospira's company training program. Further, we will develop an IPR webpage as part of Embassy San Jose's website and present links to IPR resources and two news clips: Cracking Down, a 12 minute video clip produced by Seven Network Limited for its Sunday Night television program, and The Movie Pirates, a 60 Minutes segment produced by CBS News.

COMMENT

¶10. We highly recommend screening the film Illicit in other countries with IPR enforcement challenges. The event required the seamless cooperation by the Embassy's Economic and Public Affairs section and our AmCham organization. The film's tough message confronts consumer complacency regarding pirated goods. The film effectively shows consequences that range from the unpleasant to the ugly from the seemingly casual purchase of a pirated good. Illicit skewers the notion that cheap knock-offs deliver cachet by revealing the consequences of the "dark trade."
BRENNAN